



The Ghent Declaration Initiated by the Reviewers of the EC OpenAIRE Project

Seizing the Opportunity for Open Access to European Research

We commend the European Commission for undertaking the OpenAIRE initiative, which seeks to provide the necessary infrastructure for sharing the knowledge resulting from the EC's funding of research in Europe. As reviewers of this project, we have been impressed by progress made by the OpenAIRE Project after its first year in operation. However, current opportunities for increasing the circulation of knowledge extend well beyond the scope of this project, and we feel it imperative to bring these larger opportunities and issues to the Commission's attention for possible action. We believe these matters are critical to advancing communication between scholars as well as citizens and the public good it represents. We drew up this declaration in the spirit of the statement that Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Digital Agenda, delivered at the OpenAIRE Launch: "Scientific information has the power to transform our lives for the better – it is too

valuable to be locked away. In addition, every EU citizen has the right to access and benefit from knowledge produced using public funds." We also welcome the statement made in the OpenAIRE launch event press release by Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science that "Scientists need access to research results if they are to maximise the potential of further work in the same areas. Industry, not least SMEs, need to know where to find research results if they are to build on them to create jobs and improve the quality of life."

Extending an open knowledge infrastructure

OpenAIRE is an extraordinary initiative on an impressive scale. It has undertaken the process of establishing the infrastructure needed by EC-funded researchers to make their published work Open Access within six-to-twelve months of publication. Having taken these critical initial steps towards greater openness in the advancement of research and scholarship, through both a policy mandate for open access and a provision of infrastructure to support that policy, the EC should now, in our opinion, consider further ways and means of building on this momentum. It should make the most of this digital era for realizing the greater public good that this knowledge represents. Many of the issues we highlight below came out in the presentations and in the panel session at the OpenAire launch event in Ghent on 2 December 2010 and we are encouraged to present them for public consideration in this Ghent Declaration. The opportunity at hand, as we see it, is found in the emerging convergence among open elements in the academic production of knowledge today. Considerable developments have taken place in providing open access to research and scholarship, moves are afoot to provide for open data, to rely on open source software, and to create open ed-

educational resources, all of which are adding to the quality of learning, in its broadest sense. These four open initiatives – open access, open data, open source software, and open educational resources – are not only advancing developments in research and education, they are reducing costs in these areas, making better use of existing computing power, enriching learning experiences, and providing new opportunities for service industries in this knowledge-based economy. For these reasons we believe that the European Commission would do well, going into the future, to consider ways of developing policies, research programs, and infrastructure platforms that support and advance the convergence of these four elements. From this perspective, OpenAIRE represents a first step, in advancing open access, with additional work needed in other areas to achieve a broader opening of research, scholarship, and learning.

Developing the opportunity

The EC could quickly further the convergence between open access and open source software by extending its investment in connecting, indexing and supporting open access repositories (which are based on open source software in most cases) through a similar programme for the support of open publishing platforms. These publishing platforms would allow scholarly societies and teams of scholars to move peer-reviewed journals- and monographs - to open access models. This will not only enable the published versions of research and scholarship to be made freely available, but will ensure that these groups may retain ownership and control over their publishing activities, while achieving the widest possible distribution and use of scholarly works. OpenAIRE's initial efforts at facilitating the connections and exchanges between repositories and such publishing platforms are encouraging in this regard. Open

platforms can expand to include the archiving and indexing of data sets, research instruments, and open educational resources. Better sharing and remixing of these materials will follow, while enabling full attribution and origin rights. Setting up environments for the creative use and re-use of these resources would open new possibilities for the extension of knowledge, for new forms of collaboration, and it would facilitate their integration in teaching at all levels. In the case of education, access to recent research results will greatly increase the vividness and richness of teaching materials, while also providing opportunities for integrating high-quality research activities into classrooms. Finally, we propose an expansion of the EC communication strategies, so that the EC places greater emphasis on the academic, professional, and public value of the humanities and social sciences, as well as the sciences. While open access is made possible by digitization, it is not so much a radical change as a further chapter in the historical expansion of people's right to knowledge.

Immediate policy revisions for greater openness

To secure the full scholarly and educational advantages of the European Commission's OpenAIRE initiative, we recommend two revisions to the EC's open access policy (Special Clause 39, FP7 Grant Agreement):

- firstly, the policy should require that a work deposited in a repository in compliance with the EC policy, should be placed under a non-exclusive license that allows full use of the work. For example, a Creative Commons Attribution license would explicitly enable re-use of the whole or part of the archived

work, while ensuring credits for the authors. At the same time authors may continue to grant publishers the requisite rights over the published version. Otherwise, users will experience unnecessary complications and restrictions in the process of using even a part, such as a table or an illustration from that work, in educational and research settings.

- Secondly, if a publisher refuses open access deposit in an OpenAIRE repository, the Special Clause 39 should nonetheless require EC-funded authors, to submit the publication's meta-data to a repository so as to ensure that their work forms part of the EC record of contribution to research and scholarship. This policy will make apparent barriers to non-compliance with deposit in an OpenAIRE repository.

Longer-term policy questions

If the European Commission is to build on the momentum it has achieved in advancing Open Access as part of its Digital Agenda and Innovation Union initiatives, it will also need to face a number of challenging, longer-term questions that these opportunities for greater openness raise:

- what policy implications and research programs should the EC be considering and commissioning to ensure that the four areas of "open" development (affecting publications, data, software, and education) are more productively integrated?
- in what new ways will the public funding of research need to be presented in publicity campaigns to ensure that the new openness and availability of EC and other research is seen as working for the greater public good?

- what new lessons will students and educators need to learn to take advantage of this new openness, and what greater richness will their educational experience consist in, given the wealth of original studies, archives, instruments and tools that openness could make available to them?
- what are the best licensing agreements needed to ensure the best possible use of the materials afforded by OpenAIRE and other open access initiatives? Both research and educational contexts should be kept in mind in this regard.

Europe's knowledge territory

As we see it, the infrastructure and policy developments centred around openness have the potential to transform Europe into a “knowledge territory”, that is a knowledge space structured by means and channels of communication. In other words, the European Commission will be in a position greatly to clarify the meaning and enhance the value of the European Research Area. European researchers, while remaining in touch with the whole world, could also benefit from tools that would allow for better collaboration within Europe. In particular, such goals can be assisted by computers using techniques ranging from data mining to the semantic web. However, machine-based inference techniques work well only if documents are freely accessible, are open to computation, and if adding semantic markup to them does not result in a copyright violation. With such tools, the potential European social network of knowledge could begin to appear, first in the linking of documents, then, by extension, in connections and collaborations among individuals, laboratories and institutions. Synergies at the European level would be greatly facilitated. With such tools, if a new and interesting

piece of work is emerging somewhere in Europe, those potentially concerned by it could and probably would be alerted. In turn, new collaboration possibilities would emerge between all parts of Europe, even when unlikely disciplines, specialities or marginal institutions are involved. Opening access and re-use to the results of research is also an important necessary condition for the proper locating of knowledge in our societies. Open access redefines how knowledge works in and within society. Presently, it is largely produced in specialized circles and it circulates almost exclusively among these centres. Then, at a second level of activity, it is “popularized” by a layer of professional translators, acting between the research world and the larger public. With Open Access, this two-step approach to the circulation of knowledge may not be so obviously necessary. Rather than seeing the world as a two-caste system - the experts and the public at large - Open access infrastructures such as OpenAIRE simply consider the whole population as distributed along an axis of competence. People are not expert or ignorant; they are simply more or less competent, curious, and motivated in their approach to this knowledge. Few have full competence, but, symmetrically, few are totally ignorant. Where the next good idea will come from is unknown, and opening knowledge to everyone may well generate entirely new kinds of creative ideas. While researchers will obviously continue to spearhead knowledge investigations, the rest of the population does not have to be limited to the role of spectators. What has begun with the European Commission’s support of OpenAIRE in advancing open access to research and scholarship offers an extraordinary opportunity for European leadership in repositioning knowledge as a global resource for the benefit of all.



Original version:

<http://www.openaire.eu/en/component/content/article/223-seizing-the-opportunity-for-open-access-to-european-research-ghent-declaration-publishedl>

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ABSTRACT: Issued in early 2011, the Ghent Declaration invites the EC to take up the current opportunities for increasing the circulation of knowledge beyond the aims of the OpenAIRE initiative.

KEYWORDS: ERA; Europe; Open Access; OpenAIRE.

